critical digest

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This Week In NYC

Richard II and Henry IV Part I were picked as the opening productions of the 8th season of the American Shakespeare Festival, Stratford, Conn. Executive producer Joseph Verner Reed also announced that Allen Fletcher, who has 12 years of Shakespeare festival experience at San Diego, Calif, and Ashland, Ore, will direct the first starting Jun 16; and Douglas Seale, a staff director of Old Vic, will direct the second starting Jun 17. A third bill, either Comedy of Errors or Taming of the Shrew, will be added to the repertory in Jul. $ 2 student matinees of Henry IV will begin Apr 28.

Plays

11 Broadway shows gave Thanksgiving matinees... Kean has been cut 20 minutes since opening night... The Aspern Papers, adaptation of Henry James' novel by Michael Redgrave will be presented Feb 7 at Playhouse by David Black, starring Maurice Evans who replaced Ralph Ballamy... A Gift of Time written and directed by Garson Kanin to co-star Olivia de Havilland and Henry Fonda to be presented Feb 22 by William Hammerstein... Sophie musical about Sophie Tucker to be presented next season by Harold Grossman & Leo Belson... Edwige Feuillere and her French company of 28 will present a three week NYC and three week road repertory of four productions, opening in NYC Nov 13, 1962.

Players

Elizabeth Bergner will withdraw from First Love during Philadelphia tryout run as soon as a replacement is ready. "Ill- health" is given as reason... Joanne Linville replaced Irene Dailey, Daughter of Silence... Dodo Denney, title player of Bella, joins A Family Affair ... John Carradine to make NY musical comedy debut in A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum ... Noel Willman, director of A Man for All Seasons, to be featured in Isle of Children Mar 14... Dorothy Du Bois Heyward, co-author of Porgy, died in NYC, 71.

NYC Calendar

Red Roses for Me-Greenwich Mews-(131 W 13) 11/27. Stella Holt & Beverly Landau present revival of Sean O'Casey play directed by Adrian Hall with Martyn Green, Ted van Griethuysen.

Sunday in New York-Cort-11/29. David Merrick presents farce comedy by Norman Krasna, directed by Garson Kanin with Pat Stanley, Conrad Janis, Robert Redford.

Daughter of Silence-Music Box-11/30. Richard Halliday presents Morris West's adaptation of his novel to be published Dec 5. Directed by Vincent Donehue with Emlyn Williams, Rip Torn, Joe de Santis.

Broadway Business

Variety reports vastly uneven business. Seven sellouts-Carnival, Gideon, How to Succeed, Mary Mary, Milk & Honey, Saily Away, Shot in the Dark... Shot in the Dark in its fourth week on Broadway paid back its $75,000 investment, thanks to sellout business and a $45,000 first payment on film rights.

Tickets

NY City Center to test $4.35 top at A Midsummer Night's Dream Christmas week ballet. $3.95 drama and light musical top price may also have to be raised to met increased costs.

Special Events

Lee Strasberg to give lecture on his three month European theatre trip Nov 27 at 11 30 PM at Morosco... Institute for Advanced Studies in Theatre Arts workshop production of 14th century Chinese drama The Butterfly Dream will be presented Nov 27-28 at Coolidge Auditorium, Washington. D. C. prior to performances at 416 W 42 St... From the Second City cast to give special midnight performance for UN delegates at US Mission party Nov 28.

Off Broadway

Shows that closed include-- Bella after 5 and The Automobile Graveyard after 8 performances ... Diff'rent to continue indefinitely, 'Toinette to complete its one month lease... Robert T. Seymour replaced Amnon Kabatchnik as director of Poppa Is Home, now set for Dec 14 ... Helena Carroll to repeat role in The Hostage Dec 12 she portrayed on recent tour.

Fortuna musical adaptation by Arnold Weinstein of Italian drama, music by Francis Thorne, will be the first "Writer's Theatre" production Dec 20 at Maidman, which has been leased to Burritt Productions, Inc for a year. John Wulp will direct. Red Eye of Love will play in repertory with Fortuna.

Mainliner to be name of the fourth Irving Maidman playhouse on W 42nd St. 149 seat theatre at 442 W 42 will also have rehearsal rooms in the refurbished four story building.

Trelawny of the 'Wells 1896 Pinero play to be revived by Equity Library Theatre Nov 25-Dec 3, directed by Raphael Kelly.

Theatre Book Notes

"Best American Plays 1918-1958-Supplementary Volume" edited by John Gassner, Yale Univ, published by Crown... "The Globe Playhouse" by John Cransford Adams, Hofstra College, Hempstead, NY, president, published by Barnes & Noble.

Church Drama

The Play of Daniel medieval liturgical drama to be revived Dec 27-Jan 3 by NY Pro Musica at St. George's Church, E 16 & Stuyvesant Sq with Alvin Epstein as narrator.

Theatre Film Notes

Karl Malden, Natalie Wood to co-star with Rosalind Russell in Gypsy film.

DIGEST OF CURRENT NYC THEATRE REVIEWS

The Gay Life- Shubert- 11/17. 4 pro- Times, News, Journal American, World Telegram & Sun- and 3 con- Herald Tribune, Mirror, Post- filed on new musical based on Schnitzler's "Anatol" with book by Fay and Michael Kanin, lyrics by Howard Dietz, music by Arthur Schwartz, directed and choreographed by Herbert Ross, presented by Kermit Bloomgarden with Barbara Cook, Walter Chiari, Jules Munshin, Elizabeth Allen. Affirmative majority generally applauded all elements, with extra special raves for Cook's performance. Mild negative notices also okayed performers and most of production, but vetoed uncertain mood of book and direction. Gerald Freedman gets program billing as director, though choreographer Ross replaced him during out-of-town tryout. Pro voter Taubman, Times, recommended colorful, cheerful, leisurely Old World confection spiced with paprika items to please the eye and ear. Chapman, News, rave was for good, solid entertainment inside the great, big gorgeous confection. McClain, Journal American, enjoyed evening of graceful good fun, though he felt show started slowly. Nadel, WTS, raved over stunning musical with powerful array of theatre talent. Dissenter Kerr, Herald Tribune, approved of Cook, who alone intimates the glories that might have been, but blamed both the director and authors for a basic aim - less uncertainity. The cast is guided into arch, perspiring mechanical toyshop posturing, and the book is as continental as Cracker-Jack, Herald Tribune man panned. Coleman, Mirror, thought book lacked humor and the plot took too long to work up speed in a beautiful, tuneful, driving show whose highspots come too intermittently. Watts, Post, also felt show lacked lightness of touch and the blithness of spirit that subject demands, though he found much that was excellent. Post aisle-sitter was sole reviewer to find fault with Chiari's debut, whose performance didn't help.

Androcles and the Lion and The Policemen- East 74th St (334 E 74)- 11/21. 5 pro- and 2 con- Herald Tribune, News- filed on twin bill of Shaw comedy and Polish satire by Slawomir Mrozek presented as third subscription program of Phoenix Theatre uptown season. Shaw work directed by Tom Gruenwald with John Heffernan, Alison Howard, Ken Ruta, Dana Elcar, Frederic Warriner, Polish work adapted and directed by Leonidas D-Osset - ynski with Lionel Stander, Jack Gilford, Robert Pastene. Majority of pros for the program were on basis of the Shaw play alone, only Post and World Telegram & Sun recommended both halves of bill. Watts, Post, rated Polish satire an impertinent farce that pokes daring fun at the imbecilities of the contemporary totalitarian state; the Shaw comedy not one of his major works but filled with winning fun and great charm, both excellently played. Nadel, WTS, also okayed both, the Polish play mildly as a welcome, interesting introduction to European technique of playing satirical comedy inspite of its inconclu sive ending; the Shaw play a small, bright, winning production. Taubman, Times, felt Polish play was interesting, though author not yet trained to cut crisply and keenly in dram - atic terms; but he raved about Shaw play done with verve and gaiety. Coleman, Mirror, panned Polish play as hokey and amatuerish, but recommended program for superior, intelligent, witty Shaw production. McClain, Journal American, also panned Polish play as confusing, but approved of total, unencumbered delight of Shaw play, alone worth the price of admission. Negative voter Kerr, Herald Tribune, didn't like either; the Polish play goes nowhere past the first speech, while Shaw production is tepid and generally pale version of faded Shaw work. Chapman, News panned Polish play as puerile, untheatrical, pointless and punk. He didn't remain to see the Shaw comedy, he noted, figuring that any theatrical outfit witless enough to sponsor the first part probably could have stunk up GBS too.

What Shall We Tell Caroline? and The Dock Brief- Midway (420 W 42)- 11/21. 5 con- Times, Herald Tribune, News, Post, Journal American- filed on twin bill of play - lets by John Mortimer, presented by Rose Lynch directed by Steve Chernak with Joseph Boley, Anthony Deardon. Unanimous con voters differed on their reasons. Some blamed author for dull conversation pieces, some blamed cast and director, and two critics felt author should sue for his fair rights. Funke, Times, did not think author's words signified really enough, though actors he marked as generally interesting. Crist, Herald Tribune, felt author should sue for somewhere there is a glimpse of what plays might be in the hands of persons with even the minimum degree of competence. Davis, News, feels author writes for written, not spoken, page, the result dreary conversation. Herridge, Post, thought it ashame audience couldn't met British author on fairer terms, rather than with the pedestrian direction and so-so cast. Lapole, Journal American, okayed good acting wasted on boring conversation. Twin-bill was presented under title "Back to Back" two years ago on TV "Play of the Week."

'Toinette- Theatre Marquee (110 E 59) 11/20. 1 pro- and 6 cons- filed on musical updating of Moliere's "La Malade Imaginaire" presented by Bickerstaff Productions, book by J L Rodale, music and lyrics by Deed Meyer, directed by Curt Conway with Ellie Wood, Logan Ramsey, Paul Dooley. The very, very mild review, Herridge, Post, found amusing moments thanks to Moliere, pleasant, familiar music, clever lyrics and helpful cast members in the leads. Drama editor of Post reported book was mercifully brief, though Moliere's original play and comic style lost in the shuffle. Negative notices were all harsh pans. Times and Herald Tribune reviews did not mention cast at all; News and World Telegram & Sun critics admitted they had tried to be kind but gave up. Taubman, Times, summed up the negative majority by blasting it as a witless, tasteless disaster. Davis, News, added it shows vast contempt for show business. Nadel, WTS, settled for vastly ungood.

Bella- Gramercy Arts (138 E 27)- 11/16-11/18. 7 con- unanimous- filed on musical satire of the '30s with book and lyrics by Tom O'Malley and Lance Barklie, music by Jane Douglass, directed by Richard C Shank with Will B. Able Dodo Denney, Gloria LeRoy. All agreed it was awful musical with trapped performers. Three approved of talents of Able and LeRoy. Gelb, Times, labeled it tasteless nonesense, he skipped the names of cast hoping show closed quickly so they could escape its brainless grip. Kerr, Herald Tribune, suggested cast should return to their true occupations; while he would keep program as reminder of lowspot. Awful, silly summed Davis, News. Coleman, Mirror, listed amateurish book, pedestrian lyrics, reminiscient score in awful musical. Dreadful, terrible added Watts, Post. An incredible, embarassing debacle, marked McClain, Journal American. Though Able reminded him of Ray Bolger, Nadel, WTS, also panned proceedings with impossible material. Show closed after five performances.

NYC

FUTURE

CALENDAR

Shadow of Heroes- York 12/5... Sing Muse- Van Dam- 12/6... The Apple- Living- 12/7... The Hostage - 1 Sher Sq- 12/12... First Love- Morosco- 12/13... Signs Along Cynic Route- Actor Play- 12/14... Poppa Is Home- Gate- 12/14... Plays for Bleecker St- Circle - 12/18... All Kinds of Giants- Cricket- 12/18... Hawkshaw- 12/18 ... Not While I'm Eating- Mad Av- 12/19... Fortuna - Maidman - 12/20... Take Her, She's Mine- Biltmore- 12/21... Subways Are for Sleeping- 12/26... Ross- 12/26

GREEN ROOM DEPARTMENT

ARTS SUBSIDY VIEWS... A middle-way solution to government assistance to the performing arts without controlling them backed by Herald Tribune editorial. The NY State Council on the Arts which enables existing artistic organizations (like the Phoenix Theatre) to tour the state with a financial guarantee endorsed by paper for expansion in NY state and for copying by other states... News editorial warned against penne-ante Washington bureaucrats deciding what might and might not be performed in a federal subsidy program. Discussion of this danger from every angle urged before federal moolah went to mimes... It is childish and immoral to be so horrified by the thought of cultural subsidies, comments Crosby, Herald Tribune. Columnist thinks we should subsidize the arts and not simply architects and builders... If the living theatre cannot survive on its own, then it does not deserve to live, Cedric Hardwicke told Gardella, News. Lack of plays and playwrights, not economics, is the theatre's main problem.

COLUMN TIPS... Secretary of State Dusk has asked David Merrick to recommend productions for good- will tours, reports Coleman, Mirror... Clashes with producers and director Alfred Lunt are the real reason Elizabeth Bergner is leaving First Love, hears Wilson, Post... A Far Country cast is glad Michael Tolan is replacing Steven Hill for the road tour, notes Kilgallen, Journal American. Kim Stanley didn't dig Hill's message as Freud.

LINCOLN REPERTORY... The touchstone of Lincoln Center's success will be its ability to establish an acting company of quality and to find new dramatists and produce their work compellingly, rates Morgenstern, Herald Tribune. Without either or both the dramatic salvo of Lincoln Center's anticipated cultural explosion may seriously misfire... Lincoln Center and National Cultural Center, Washington, DC, will one day make terribly interesting Crumbling Ruins over which archeologists will speculate, predicts Crosby, Herald Tribune.

CRITICAL THOUGHTS... Brecht was unquestionably a key figure in the modern drama, but the current tendency to deify him seems excessive, states Watts, Post... Current plays with the exception of Gideon treat of people so low in mind, aspiration and idealism as to make them unrewarding of theatrical projection, complains Coleman, Mirror.

ELECTRONIC PRODUCERS... IBM Service Bureau Corp aid in decision making for Joseph Manchester 's forthcoming production of Morgana by Dalton Trumbo unveiled. Data on 200 kinds of theatre activities will be evaluated by PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique.) But the IBM machine is still unable to predict what show the critics will like, or how a playwright can create a successful play, advises Calta, Times.

CHECKING THE ADS... "Bedroom Farce"--NY Post, is quote line used this week by both All in Love and 'Toinette.

PROS & CONS BY TMK

The Policemen and Androcles and the Lion twin-bill at Phoenix is brilliant, entertaining, meaningful theatre at its most delightful and most important. It fulfills its Off Broadway function by introducing a clever Polish satirist, two bright directors, and two talented theatre composers. This plus superb ensemble acting by the entire young company. If there must be a minor complaint it is aimed at the unnecessarily long prop changes in the witty Polish playlet. Otherwise plays, players and production mark highlight of Phoenix program in recent years, and perhaps a happy hint of path group may take in future.

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What Shall We Tell Caroline? and The Dock Brief twin-bill at Midway is a disappointing production of two clever British playlets by the talented John Mortimer that suffer from poor acting performances and a complete lack of direction. Audience members ambitious enough to transpose the speeches back into the script and guess how the would-be tour-de-force roles might be handled by a brilliant director and equally brilliant British players might still find this first NY glimpse of Mortimer's work worthwhile. Those who don't enjoy such histronic mental stimulation will have to wait until next time.

* *

Utopia, Limited is a handsome , pleasant revival of a seldom presented Gilbert & Sullivan satire. The still timely attack on British social and economic mores has many very funny ideas. As the work is less familiar to both cast and audience, the usual up-dating and comic asides by the company are wisely disposed of. Now if some humanitarian will lower the sound on the Hammond organ, all will be wonderful with this fine musical repertory series.

* *

Bella was an expensive, amateur bore. Its main interest was in logistics, rather than talent. Just how 30 cast members, 5 stagehands, 150 costumes and 10 sets fitted backstage at the peanut size Gramercy Arts is a problem that would fascinate the Marx Bros. Except for comic-dancer Will B. Able the cast was hopeless. The book and lyrics had little comedy, and less literacy. The music was very neat Cole Porter-type.

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The Off Broadway theatre does not need a federal subsidy as much as it needs a strict income tax investigation. If the local Director of Internal Revenue was on the alert, Off Broadway investors would be in real trouble for listing their donations to " entertainment enterprises." While the producers would be in jail on perjury charges if the called themselves "professionals."

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Never mind about converting atomic bombs to peacetime use, let some scientist discover the miracle of transforming the public relations genuis that promoted the "Twist" to a national social pastime to the sponsorship of exciting, creative theatre.

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OUTER

BROADWAY

THEATRE

LETTER

Arts Bills

Many arguments in favour of federal subsidies for the performing arts, but few specific proposals were presented by the 27 witnesses before the House Select Sub-Committee on Education hearing at Foley Sq Court House, NYC, Rep Frank Thompson, Jr(D-NJ) chairman. Further hearings will be held in Los Angeles and Washington. D. C.

A 5% tax on TV broad casters netting $100 million a year to build new theatres suggested by Herman Shumlin... NYC was urged to take over the Metropolitan Opera House, which he would fill for 6 months a year, promised Sol Hurok... City subsidy plan of giving money only to those communities which want good professional theatre and want it bad enough to raise half the sum needed, detailed by W. McNeil Lowry, Ford Foundation... A Secretary of the Arts in the cabinet hoped for by Dore Schary... Hal Holbrook, one of many actors who spoke, stated he is for any legislation that will help the artist work with consistency, dedication and dignity.

Rep. Thompson concluded that government subsidies are required if drama and music companies are to flourish.

College Theatre

School for Dictators a modern German satire by poet-novelist Erich Kaestner to be presented Nov 30-Dec 2 at Lake Forest, Ill, College, translated by staff member Dr. Marvin Dilkey... $1000 cash prize and leading role in I Am A Camera Pasadena, Calif, Playhouse production to be presented in competition among college and little theatre group actresses, sponsored by John van Druten Foundation... New Orleans branch of Louisiana State Univ suspended campus productions because of a role given to a Negro student.

Community Theatres

Elmwood Community Playhouse, Nyack, NY new revue praised by Talese, Times, as show which crackled with sophistication and professionalism. Wile it directed barbs at American frivolity, it also touched upon serious subjects

Winter Repertory

Actors Workshop, San Francisco, tour to be presented in Feb by S. Hurok. Hedda Gabler, Waiting for Godot and a contemporary play will be presented in repertory at colleges and towns not usually visited by Broadway road shows. Hurok is also planning tours of Arena Stage, Washington. DC, and Alley Theatre, Houston.

Ghosts production of 4th St Theatre, NYC, to give Dec 11, Mon, performance at McCarter Theatre, Princeton, NJ... The Zoo Story and The Maids to be directed by Larry Arrick Dec 12 at Playwrights from the Second City, Chicago ... Holly Hart replaced Pamela Mason in Theatre 90, Los Angeles Pal Joey. ... Douglas Campbell, Gideon, to be assistant artistic director of Tyrone Guthrie Playhouse, Minneapolis.

Communications Group

Ford Foundation Theatre Communication Group of college and non-profit professional companies held fall meeting Nov 17-18 at Arena Stage, Washington. DC.

TV Notes

General Seeger by Ira Levin script read on WJBK-TV (Detroit) program aimed at selling $3 subscriptions for two play $300,000 project of George C. Scott and Ted Mann. Plays would be presented in Detroit prior to Broadway and road tours.

Playbill

"Playbill" to start national expansion plan by printing 20,000 copies weekly in Los Angeles in Jan with same editorial features as NYC edition.

Road Shows

Lena Horne Nine O'Clock Revue folded in New Haven after five week tour ... Gypsy road company production with Mary McCarty opened in Philadelphia with 3 million "twofers" distributed, and without inviting critics of dailies... Susan Watson, Bye Bye Birdie, signed for leading roal of road Carnival ... Kent Smith replaced ill Melvyn Douglas, The Best Man... Bus & truck company of The Best Man to open in Jan in Worcester, Mass with Scott Brady, Tom Tully.

London

The Cherry Orchard with John Gielgud, Peggy Ashcroft, Dorothy Tutin to be presented Dec 13 at Aldwych... Othello directed by Franco Zeffirelli and The Hollow Crown to join Aldwych repertory in Jan. Later in 1962 the Royal Shakespeare Co will include The Caucasian Chalk Circle. .. Mourning Becomes Electra opened to favorable notices at Old Vic with Barbara Jefford... Gideon rights sought by Laurence Olivier for the opening of his Chickester Festival.

Paris

The Pebbles (Les Callioux) by Marceau to open in Jan at Theatre Atelier... Merry Wives of Windsor at Theatre Alliance Francoise and The Trojans at Theatre Recamier are hits.

Spoleto Festival

The Ides of March by Thornton Wilder and The Apoclypse of the Virgin, a medieval mystery play, to debut at Spoleto, Italy, Festival of Two Worlds next summer.

Germany

Hamburg fall season opend with 7 new productions the first week including Saroyan's Settled Out of Court... The Hostage opening at Ulm caused near riot with catcalls and jeers at final curtain... Actis historical drama about Nero by Lawrence Durrell presented at Deutsches Schauspielhaus, Hamburg, theatre group which presented Faust in US last year.

Current Road Tours

Captains & Kings-Shubert, Detroit- 11/27

First Love- Locust, Philadelphia- 11/27

Night of the Iguana-Blackstone, Chicago 11/21

Something About A Soldier- Playhouse, Wilmington 11/29

"CD" digests all theatre material in the 2100 pages of 7 NY daily papers of the preceding week." CD" subscribers are invited to inquire further for more specific data on current reviews, back reviews and out-of-town tryout reviews via mail, phone or drop by for coffee and facts when in NYC.